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DEPT FOR AF/SPG, A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON  
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SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: UNMIS REGIONAL COORDINATOR ON THE SITUATION IN ABYEI, UNMIS  
MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND ELECTIONS

REF: KHARTOUM 962

11. (SBU) Summary: In a July 9 meeting with Consul General Juba, UNMIS Regional Coordinator for Southern Sudan David Gressley described UNMIS support for restoring security to Abyei and the conditions that must be met before the UN will aid in the return of IDPs to the town. He also reviewed the performance of UNMIS in the region, and the limited capabilities of the UN forces deployed in South Sudan, as well as the possibility of holding successful elections in 2009. End Summary

12. (SBU) Gressley opened the discussion of recent events in Abyei by explaining that UNMIS currently has 18 people in Abyei town itself to monitor the current situation and help to prepare for the return of IDPs to their homes. Until the security situation improves, 18 is the limit to what the UN will place in Abyei since that is the maximum number that can be evacuated in a single MI-8 helicopter in the event of renewed fighting. One of the jobs being undertaken is the clearing of mines and unexploded ordinance from the town, a job that has largely been completed. When the SAF moves out of Abyei, and the new Administration is in place along with the Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) and police, UNMIS will increase its presence in the town.

13. (SBU) Gressley said that while the training of the Joint Integrated Unit by UNMIS had largely finished and the deployment of the JIU was now dependent on the final withdrawal of all SAF forces from the town, police training had not yet begun. There were now 340 police sent by Khartoum in place and ready to be trained, but the GOSS had not yet sent in their men, and until both sides had their forces in place UNMIS training would not begin. The hold up on the GOSS side was, Gressley thought, their search to find candidates to join the contingent who were from Abyei. That was taking time, but when they were ready, the UN was prepared to move them from Wau to Abyei. He expected the total police force to number between 700 to 1000 men when fully assembled.

14. (SBU) Gressley said that about 400 IDPs had returned to Abyei, and he expected more will continue to trickle back over the coming days. However, he stressed that the UN will not encourage or support IDP return until the conditions were right for it and security could be adequately guaranteed. This would require the complete withdrawal of all SAF soldiers from the town and the establishment of an Abyei administration, as well as the insertion of the JIU and police forces. Short of those conditions, IDPs were potentially only placing themselves in harm's way again.

15. (SBU) Gressley said that the SAF had begun to move out of Abyei, but then stopped when a SAF soldier and UN MILOB were wounded in Agok, just south of Abyei, by an SPLM soldier. The SAF soldier was not seriously injured, but having been shot in the head the MILOB had been evacuated to Nairobi where there is medical scanning equipment to determine the extent of his injuries. Gressley said he expected that officer would survive, but that it had been a close

call. Asked if he thought the SAF would use this incident as an excuse to halt their evacuation from Abyei, Gressley indicated that he did not think so, since if the NCP had made the decision to withdraw they would probably continue. If they were not serious about withdrawal, they could always find an excuse not to do so, and did not need the incident in Agok to call a halt. In fact, there were indications that the SAF would resume withdrawing from Abyei within the next 24 hours, and he promised to advise the ConGen should that happen. He said the SPLA had continued to withdraw its forces from the region, as agreed.

¶6. (SBU) Asked about the performance of UNMIS in Abyei, Gressley said that an independent review had been conducted (reftel) to assess what happened before, during and after the fighting broke out. He thought more might have been done to prevent the outbreak of violence, but that once the two armies were engaged, in his view there was little the UNMIS commander in Abyei could have done. There were, he said, only 300 UNMIS soldiers in the Abyei UN camp at the time, and their equipment was severely limited. The opposing forces massively outnumbered the UN, and were far better armed with heavy weaponry, including tanks and missile launchers. Fortunately, civilian casualties had not been high, and the camp did move to provide shelter to over 100 civilians seeking refuge from the fighting. In fact, said Gressley, UNMIS faces the same problem all over Southern Sudan. They are under equipped and: \*0PXSUDAN

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SUBJECT: UNMIS REGIONAL COORDINATOR ON THE SITUATION IN ABYEI, UNMIS MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND ELECTIONS

¶7. (SBU) On the subject of elections, Gressley stated his grave reservations that preparations can be properly completed in time to hold them in 2009. Even of greater concern, he said, is that if the donor community pressures all sides to rush their completion in 2009, and the ground work as a result is poorly prepared, the potential for increasing instability and violence, both North - South and well as South - South, might be greatly amplified. The experience with the census demonstrated just how fragile North - South cooperation can be, and the holding of elections would be far more complicated, with far more at stake for all concerned.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: We have heard from several sources that the SAF 31st brigade has resumed its withdrawal from Abyei. It has taken too long already, and there remains a doubt in the minds of some observers that the SAF will actually fully withdraw. CDA pushed NCP party officials on this point in a meeting July 10, pointing out that there is little hope of the regime changing its image in the West if it cannot follow through on the Abyei roadmap (septel). We agree with Gressley's assessment on elections; the Sudanese together with the international community must be well prepared for elections as the risk of instability is high, especially if the South perceives that the North is angling to delay or scuttle the referendum.

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